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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

27 February 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Cambodian Involvement in the Supply of Arms and
Ammunition to Communist Forces in South Vietnam

CONCLUSIONS

A. There is now no doubt that elements of the Cambodian Army, acting under the authority of Chief of State Sihanouk, have supervised the movement of substantial quantities of arms and ammunition from Sihanoukville to Communist forces in South Vietnam. Nonetheless the quantities involved during 1968 and 1969 were probably no more than one-half of the minimum Communist re-supply requirements in southern II, III and IV Corps.

B. During this same period, large quantities of ordnance continued to move overland from North Vietnam through the Laotian panhandle. Substantial quantities of supplies reached the tri-border area. We cannot quantify the flow southward from there toward III Corps but we have new evidence of the existence of a

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functioning logistic organization along the trails leading south. There is no question that the capacity of this trail system is adequate to sustain Communist forces in lower II, III and IV Corps at 1968-1969 levels of combat even should Cambodia cut-off the flow from Sihanoukville. For all these reasons, we believe that Hanoi still considers the overland route as basic to its position and strategy in southern South Vietnam.

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DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

1. We have been certain since at least late 1968 that Communist arms, masked as legitimate bloc aid to the Cambodian Army (FARK), were moving with official Cambodian complicity to the VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam. What remained unclear was the level and nature of Cambodian complicity, the actual tonnages involved, and the importance, from Hanoi's point of view, of the Sihanoukville-Cambodian route relative to the overland route from North Vietnam through Laos and southward along the Cambodian-Vietnam border to the lower II Corps and III Corps areas.

2. On the basis of

new data relating to the overland route, and intensive analytical work in Washington we feel that more confident judgments are possible on most aspects of this problem. There still remain some key gaps, however, which stand in the way of firm and precise estimates on the tonnages moving from Sihanoukville and via the overland route.

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A. The Nature of Cambodian Complicity

3. We are now convinced that Cambodian complicity in arms movements derives from an agreement between Sihanouk and Peking made at the latter's initiative probably some time in 1966. Sihanouk's motives almost certainly were primarily those of trying to ingratiate his country with those forces which he saw as prevailing in his part of the world in the years ahead, and of attempting to gain some leverage with Hanoi. His involvement was clearly demonstrated in 1969 when the arms flow was temporarily discontinued on his orders. While a number of Cambodian personalities appear to profit from the arms movement, we do not believe such considerations exercise a decisive influence on Sihanouk's decisions in this affair.

4. The actual organization in Cambodia which handles the arms has gone through various changes but remains under the overall control of General Lon Nol, currently Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. A document

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clearly indicates that as of early 1969, Chinese Communist military aid deliveries to Sihanoukville included "special military aid," which was handled separately from military aid imports normally handled by the

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Bureau of External Aid of the Ministry of National Defense. The document also indicates that "special military teams" of the FARK General Staff, Phnom Penh, were charged with transporting the "special military aid from Sihanoukville to its destination."

[redacted] the bulk of "special military aid" supplies are earmarked for transshipment through FARK channels to Vietnamese Communist forces in South Vietnam. The intermediate transshipment point has been identified as the Ministerial Depot at Chbar Morn (near Kompong Speu), where at least two of several warehouses have been allocated to the special mission operation.

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5. The management of special mission operations apparently is in the hands of Lt. Col. Les Kosem, newly appointed head of an Office of Special Missions within the Ministry of National Defense.

B. The Quantification of Ordnance Deliveries to VC/NVA Forces Via FARK*

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[redacted]

* Ordnance is defined to include principally explosives, chemicals, pyrotechnics, bombs, guns, and ammunition. It does not include clothing, foodstuffs, and medicines.

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we are

reasonably certain that at least 2000 tons of arms were delivered to the Communists between October 1968 and January 1970.

7. The best, but still imperfect method for cross-checking these figures on deliveries to the VC/NVA is to estimate the tonnages of Communist arms and ammunition reaching Sihanoukville, subtract FARK inventories and expenditures, and declare the residual to be the amount available for transshipment to the Communists.

8. At least 6800 tons of ordnance are known to have been delivered to Sihanoukville from bloc sources since 1965. In addition, we believe that another 4100 tons of cargo delivered during the same period was probably military cargo that included some non-ordnance items:

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METRIC TONS DELIVERED TO SIHANOUKVILLE

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1966-69</u>	<u>1968-69</u>
Confirmed Ordnance	817	11	2,137	3,834	6,799	5,971
Probable Military Supplies*	0	2,521	1,600	0	4,121	1,600
TOTALS	<u>817</u>	<u>2,532</u>	<u>3,737</u>	<u>3,834</u>	<u>10,920</u>	<u>7,571</u>

9. We believe the totals given above represent reasonable orders of magnitude for the actual deliveries of arms and ammunition to Sihanoukville. But we are less certain as to the amounts which should be subtracted to account for FARK inventory and expenditures.

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FARK inventories of Soviet and Chinese ordnance were at least at the level of 3900 tons at the end of 1969. The bulk of the inventories were probably built up in the last two years because the major proportion of the deliveries took place in those years. We still lack any useful intelligence on FARK expenditures but we estimate that about 900 tons were consumed in the period 1968-69.

* We are unable to isolate the ordnance component in these tonnages.

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[redacted]
[redacted] we arrive at a residual estimate for 1968-1969 on
the order of 2000-4000 tons.

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[redacted]
[redacted] These figures only represent ordnance which
could have been available for shipment to the VC/NVA forces.

They do however correspond fairly closely to [redacted]

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[redacted] actual movements to the VC/NVA forces,
during the period October 1968-15 January 1970.

11. It should be clear from the above that the movement
of arms through Cambodia constitutes an important source of
supply for the Communists in southern South Vietnam. Nonetheless,
if we assume that up to 3000 tons were actually delivered to them
in 1968-1969, this would only amount to no more than one-half of
the estimated Communist re-supply requirements for arms and
ammunition in lower II, III and IV Corps during the same two
year period.

12. What are the chances of gross error in these calculations?
The key data is, of course, that which relates to arms deliveries
at Sihanoukville. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We have a high degree of confidence that our estimates of arms and ammunition deliveries at Sihanoukville do not contain gross error and we think that they are, in fact, accurate within a range of 10 percent or so. If ordnance deliveries via Sihanoukville fall well short of minimum Communist requirements, the obvious conclusion is that other routes are also in active use.

C. The Overland Route

13. The principal alternative route for the flow of ordnance to southern South Vietnam is overland from North Vietnam via the well developed logistic system in the Lao panhandle and then southward from the tri-border area to III Corps. The portion of this route below the tri-border area has some motorable trails; for the rest it consists of a long established foot and bicycle trail network which runs along both sides of the Cambodian-Vietnam border through country strongly defended by the VC/NVA and seldom penetrated by friendly forces or patrols.

* See EM 69-177, Chinese And Soviet Military Deliveries to Cambodia [REDACTED] December 1969

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14. In previous years our computations have shown the Communists moving tonnages through the Laos panhandle more than adequate to cover their ordnance requirements in all of South Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the quantity of supplies moving in the panhandle during December 1969 and January 1970 was substantially higher than a year ago. One result of this logistic activity has been the movement of a minimum of 4000 tons of ordnance well south of Tchepone during the period October 1968-January 1970. [REDACTED]

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15. [REDACTED]

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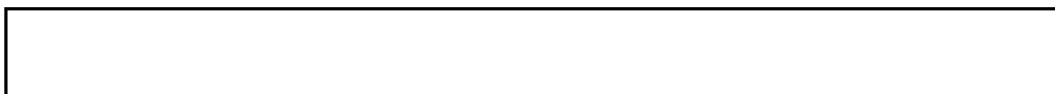
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from Muong Nong to Chavane. The amount of material moving south of Muong Nong increased substantially through December and January as the later, more intense, "crash" programs proceeded.** The successful movement of supplies through the panhandle was



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substantiated

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18. Logistics Activity South of the Tri-Border Area. In the past, we have had little direct evidence of the actual movement of supplies southward from the tri-border area. This is still the case, but during the current dry season new facts have come to light revealing the existence of logistics way stations (Binh Trams) south of the tri-border area.

a. BT - Bac is located just south of the tri-border area and is responsible for supplying VC/NVA units in Kontum Province and for moving supplies southward.

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b. BT - Trung is sited just north of the Se San River and is charged with supplying units in Pleiku Province and moving supplies southward.

c. BT - Nam, we believe, is north of the Tonle Srepok/Ea Krong River (which forms the southern border of the B-3 Front area), and supplies primarily units in Darlac Province.

19. Although the B-3 Front transportation system appears to function mainly to provide logistic support to units operating in its area, it almost certainly serves also as the link in the north-south logistic flow to units operating south of the B-3 Front. [] indicated that supplies were being moved from the Laotian panhandle to units in the MR-10 area (Quang Duc and Phuoc Long Provinces) south of the B-3 Front. These supplies transported into III Corps presumably were moved to the southern border of the B-3 Front by the BT system in the B-3 Front.

20. We still cannot verify the overland movement of supplies from the tri-border area to the borders of III Corps []

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[] The trail network throughout this

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area is not covered [REDACTED]

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But the trail capacity exists to move large quantities of supplies, it has been constantly improved and defended, there is good evidence of the presence of an operating logistics organization, and there are more than sufficient supplies being moved into the tri-border area to support further southward movements.

D. Sea Infiltration

21. We believe that some very small amounts of arms continue to enter South Vietnam across Cambodian and Southern South Vietnam beaches; these are shipments via junks which evade [REDACTED] patrols. The two, possibly three, unsuccessful attempts by steel-hulled trawlers detected by [REDACTED] patrols in South Vietnam may indicate supply problems in the Delta or may reflect probes by the North Vietnamese to test the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese Navy now patrolling the Delta coast. We do not believe that sea infiltration plays any significant part in the enemy's supply plans nor is it likely to do so so long as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] patrols enjoy their present high degree of success.

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E. The Relative Importance of Alternative Routes

22. It is still premature to quantify in a final way the flow of arms from Sihanoukville to the VC/NVA. And we have no basis for a direct estimate of the ordnance reaching southern II, III, and IV Corps via the overland route. On the basis of our examination of the evidence, the tonnages coming via the Sihanoukville route fall well short of meeting minimum Communist requirements.

23. The Cambodian government's interruption of supply shipments to the VC/NVA during the summer of 1969 must have underscored for Communist planners the unreliability of this supply source. While the Laotian route is costly to maintain and susceptible to bombing interdiction, it cannot be closed by political decision, and it almost certainly remains the enemy's basic logistical channel to South Vietnam.

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